The Right to Selective and Secular C. O. Status, P. 2

Maybe Laird's Succeeded in Initiating Secret Talks With Himself

"Washington, April 3—Defense Secretary Laird said today that secret talks aimed at settling the Vietnam war were under way and had shown 'some sign of progress.'"
—New York Times, *April 4*

"Nixon Administration and South Vietnamese sources now claim they have a new and united negotiating position ready for secret peace talks in Paris. But these sources concede that no actual bargaining with the Communist side has yet started." —Washington Post *April 5*

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The Best Kept Secret of the Vietnam War

It is hard to imagine a document less candid and more opaque than Gen. Westmoreland's report on the Vietnamese war. He was in command in the years of its greatest escalation, and his account is about on a par with a complacent author reviewing his own book. It was — in his own considered opinion — a continuous triumph, a military marvel, in which any shortcomings and the singular lack of a final victory were all due to other factors—the limitations imposed on him by his political superiors and the impatience of the U.S. public. His account nevertheless contains an inadvertent revelation, and this in turn shows how effectively the U.S. military can close the shutters on an "open society" and keep the American people from knowing what is really going on. The revelation concerns the year 1965, when Westmoreland took over and made Vietnam an American war. This was the year we began to bomb the North and to put combat troops into the South.

If We Had Only Known Then

It has always been assumed that we committed our troops again to an Asian ground war at the request of the Saigon government to save it from defeat. It now appears from Westmoreland's narrative that the commitment of U.S. combat troops was a unilateral decision by our military, that the South Vietnamese were not only reluctant to see our combat troops enter the country but when they did arrive tried to restrict their deployment and keep them as far as possible from Saigon and other populated areas. It is easy to imagine the uproar in Congress and the country if this had not been kept hidden at the time. If it had been known that the Saigon regime itself feared "Americanization" of the war, this would have strengthened the demand that we negotiate instead of escalate — that we do then what we are finally doing now after four years of futile bloodshed. It is heartbreaking to look back and notice that on February 1, 1965, just before we took over the war, only 258 Americans had been killed in Vietnam.

It is strange how, with all the correspondents there were in Vietnam, Saigon's misgivings were kept from public knowledge. This, the best kept secret of the Vietnamese war, can now be pieced together from three passing references in Westmoreland's account. The first is at pages 98-99 in his chapter on 1965 as "The Year of Commitment". There he says that by the late spring of 1965 he was convinced that the Saigon government could not survive for more than six months unless the U.S. put in "substantial numbers" of combat troops. He nowhere says Saigon asked for them; only that *he* became convinced of their need. The troops began to arrive in July and the first combat commitment put the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) into the Central Highlands. Saigon "concurred" in the decision to deploy the 1st Cavalry in the Highlands. "In fact," Westmoreland discloses, "they suggested that all deploying U.S. combat forces be concentrated in this comparatively remote area *in order to minimize the impact upon the South Vietnamese economy and populace.*" (Our italics.) That sounds as if Saigon were less fearful of defeat than of American "invasion".

Westmoreland reveals that he decided to override Saigon's objections. He says he felt it "essential" that U.S. combat units "be available to reinforce and stiffen South Vietnamese forces in the critical areas of high population density." He adds, "Consequently, I planned to build up U.S. forces in an arc around Saigon and in the populous coastal areas *and not to restrict U.S. troops to the Central Highlands.*" (Our italics.) To ignore Saigon's wishes was, clearly, to treat South Vietnam as a colonial possession, where we made the final decisions, just as the French had. This does not keep Westmoreland, eight pages later, from referring blandly to "the enemy's absurd claim that the U.S. was no more than a colonial power!"

When one checks back on what was hapening in Saigon at the time one begins to wonder whether Westmoreland may not have had other contingencies in mind when he insisted on deploying U.S. troops around Saigon. In 1965 peace

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But How Do You Vote If You're In Jail?

Q. Mr. Secretary, you have spoken repeatedly, both here and on other occasions, about the importance of self-determination for South Vietnam and an open political process there. I wonder how you would reconcile this with the recent jailing of the Buddhist monk and the continuing presence in prison of Truong Dinh Dzu, the presidential candidate. Have you discussed this with the government of South Vietnam? What is your position on it?

SEC. ROGERS: Yes, we have discussed it. I don't think the two questions are particularly related. One involves civil liberties and the other involves voting rights. As far as voting rights are concerned, these two cases you have mentioned wouldn't affect that...

—Secretary Rogers' press conference, April 7.

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sentiment surfaced strongly in South Vietnam. In February the Buddhists launched a campaign for a negotiated settlement, demanding the withdrawal of both U.S. and Communist forces. In March the Saigon police broke up an attempt by the smaller but powerful Cao Dai sect to begin a similar campaign. In May Catholic die-hards accused Saigon's last civilian government, that of Phan Huy Quat, of secretly conspiring with the Buddhists to purge the military and negotiate peace. In June they forced the civilian regime to resign and brought in the Thieu-Ky military dictatorship. The military made its debut by ordering all of Saigon's 36 Vietnamese language papers suspended for "purification", no doubt of peace sentiment. Was Westmoreland anxious to put U.S. troops around Saigon so they would be ready to intervene if a government committed to negotiating peace had come to power?

Even Ky Resisted

Even after the military take-over in Saigon, the South Vietnamese regime still wanted to confine U.S. combat troops to areas remote from population centers. This is indicated on page 114 in Westmoreland's chapter on 1966 as "The Year of Development"*. There he tells how he positioned U.S. combat troops around Saigon. "This again affirmed my conviction," he writes, "that the combined U.S.-South Vietnamese military effort must begin in the critical areas in which the population was concentrated." Apparently the South Vietnamese government still disagreed with him, even though Ky was now premier. For Westmoreland adds, "Secretary McNamara, on a visit to Saigon, supported me in my opposition *to yet another South Vietnamese suggestion* (our italics) that U.S. forces be deployed only to remote areas such as the Central Highlands." In this carefully sanitized narrative, we are not told *why* Saigon persisted in its "suggestion". One reason may appear at page 132. There, in discussing 1967 as "The Year of The Offensive", Westmoreland says that while half of our combat troops continued to be deployed "in close proximity to the heavily populated areas of the country", the other half were used as highly mobile "fire brigade" forces. Westmoreland says "their tremendous firepower made it vastly more desirable that they fight in remote, unpopulated areas if the enemy would give battle there. *This would enable the full U.S. fire potential to be employed without the danger of civilian casualties.*" (Our italics).

This is what Saigon feared. In discussing Psychological Operations/Civic Action, Westmoreland says at page 239, "Even though reports indicated that civilian losses ran well behind those experienced in World Wars I and II and Korea, I continued to emphasize the efforts to keep losses at a minimum." But the World Wars were *total* wars, and the Korean war after the first few months was waged largely in North Korea, which was enemy territory and where we levelled just about everything. South Vietnam was not supposed to be an enemy country. Jonathan Schell, the *New Yorker* correspondent, spent several weeks flying over Quang Ngai Province in South Vietnam in the spring of 1967 in the two-seater FAC (Forward Air Control) planes which helped to find targets for air strikes. He found that 70% of the villages in the province had been destroyed, that about 40% of

*** i.e. military development.**

The "Galvanization" Seems to Have Worn Off

"For the people of South Vietnam, the enemy Tet offensive was a Pearl Harbor, a surprise attack which brought the shock of war for the first time to many citizens and galvanized them into military and political action . . . The unprecedented response of the Vietnamese Armed Forces . . . gave heart to all of us."

—Westmoreland's first "posture statement" as Army Chief of Staff: Senate Armed Services March 25.

"South Vietnamese Army and regional militia units carrying out patrols and ambushes make contact with the enemy on the average of one in every 700 such small-unit actions. The scarcity of combat during these patrols suggests that an 'understanding' between the government forces on the local level and the guerrillas is in effect in many areas of South Vietnam. American combat units make contact on the average of once in every 16 small-unit actions . . . 'I wouldn't go so far as to say there is an arrangement here, but I do get the idea that Charles and my counterpart both seem to know what the other is doing most of the time,' an adviser in an area traditionally a stronghold for local insurgents said recently."

—Bentley Orrick from Saigon, Baltimore Sun, *April 5.*

An Historic Decision Upholding Selective and Secular Objection to The Vietnam War

"The sincerely conscientious man, whose principles flow from reflection, education, practice, sensitivity to conflicting claims, and a search for a meaningful life, always brings impressive credentials. When he honestly believes that he will act wrongly if he kills, his claim obviously has great magnitude. That magnitude is not appreciably lessened if his belief relates not to war in general, but to a particular war or to a particular type of war. Indeed a selective conscientious objector might reflect a more discriminating study of the problem, a more sensitive conscience, and a deeper spiritual understanding. . .

"When a nation is fighting for its very existence there are public and private interests of great magnitude in conscripting for the common defense all available resources, including manpower for combat. But a campaign fought with limited forces for limited objects with no likelihood of a battlefield within this country and without a declaration of war is not a claim of comparable magnitude. . . . [This] is reflected in the nation's lack of calls for sacrifice in any serious way by civilians . . .

"Some suppose that the only reliable conscience is one responsive to a formal religious community . . . But in Religion in the Making Alfred North Whitehead taught us that 'religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness.' . . . Often it is harder to detect a fraudulent adherent to a religious creed than to recognize a sincere moral protestant. We can all discern Thoreau's integrity more quickly than we might detect some churchman's hypocrisy . . .

"When the state . . . seeks to override reasonable moral commitments it makes a dangerously uncharacteristic choice. The law grows from the deposits of morality. . . . The law cannot be adequately enforced by the courts alone, or . . . by the police and the military. The true secret of legal might lies in the habits of conscientious men disciplining themselves to obey the law . . . When the law treats a reasonable, conscientious act as a crime, it subverts its own power. It invites civilian disobedience. It impairs the very habits which nourish and preserve the law."

—Chief Judge Wyzanski, U.S. District Court, Boston, in U.S. v. John Heffron Sisson, Jr. April 1.

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the population lived in "refugee camps" and that another 40% lived underground beneath their destroyed homes in areas that were shelled regularly by artillery fire. In his book, "The Military Half", Schell reported "the overriding fantastic fact that we are destroying, simply by inadvertence, the very country we are supposedly protecting."

Another White Man's Army

Saigon also feared the effect of U.S. combat troops—as Westmoreland writes—"upon the . . . populace." Foreign troops always stir resentment, not only as an occupying power but even as an ally, largely because in an immemorial fashion they turn so many of the women into whores. But there was a special reason why Saigon had to fear the impact on its people. The "Americanization" of the war meant that a decade after the French had left, here was another, white man's army, taking over in South Vietnam. For so nationalistic a people as the Vietnamese, this was bound to impair the "face" of the Saigon regime, to make it seem a puppet again, and to drive more of the youth into disaffection or the rebellion.

Westmoreland writes (p. 71) that on his arrival in South Vietnam the "strong and direct connection between military and political problems was quickly impressed upon me." In an appendix on "Psychological Operations/Civic Action" (at page 239) he speaks of Vietnam as "a politically sophisticated war." But there is very little evidence that he understands the politics of the war. Politics at bottom are people, and people are not Westmoreland's specialty. There is no sign in him of humor or humanity, even in dealing with our own troops much less the enemy. I do not mean to imply that the General is an inhumane man; the best word to describe him is "wooden"—I first heard it from someone who knew him well in Vietnam. For him as for Admiral Sharp, who was in charge of the air and naval bombardment of the North, the war was an Operation Bulldozer, the application of overwhelming power to punish and to terrorize into submission, what the Germans in World War I called *Schrecklichkeit*.

The two main political problems were the fierce nationalism of the Vietnamese and the land hunger of the peasantry. You will find no light on either in the 350 double-columned pages of the Westmoreland-Sharp report on the war and the bombing. The nationalistic factor is what General Giap had in mind when he said that when the U.S. had a million men in Vietnam, the National Liberation Front would have won the war. We would have been well on the way to that million now if Johnson had given Westmoreland the 200,000 more men he wanted instead of kicking him upstairs to Army Chief of Staff. The land question was summed up in a captured Viet Cong document first published in Saigon in 1966.* "The essence of the national problem," it said, "is the farmer's problem. The basic problem of the farmers is land. This is a strategic problem we can never neglect."

Land Reform is the No. 1 Unmentionable in the Westmoreland report. His appendix on Pacification talks of the "Revolutionary Development" teams but he never explains what, if anything, was revolutionary about them. We are told they help the peasants improve "hygiene, sanitation, education and medical facilities." They ask for land and we give them latrines! The Army's Area Handbook for South Viet-

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*** Page 28 of the report on Land Reform in Vietnam by the Stanford Research Institute for AID. It appeared originally in an Aug. 1966 JUSPAO report on "The South Vietnamese Communists and Rural Vietnam".**

The Crack In Laird's Crystal Ball

Mr. SPIVAK: Professor Brzezinski, based upon your studies, would you say that the Soviet Union genuinely fears the United States and arms to protect herself or that she believes she may one day be able to conquer the United States by a sudden nuclear strike?

Mr. BRZEZINSKI: Well, I don't think one excludes the other but I would doubt that at the present moment the Soviet leadership was geared to making preparations for some hypothetical x-day in the future on which it would launch a pre-emptive first strike against the United States. I can see Soviet military planners considering this among other alternatives as something that has to be taken into account. But I would doubt that a political leadership such as the Soviets', particularly divided political leadership, could conclude, today, that seven years from now it will launch a pre-emptive first strike against the United States and base its strategic planning on that basis.

—Prof. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Director of the Research Institute on Communist Affairs at Columbia, former member of the State Department Policy Planning Council, on Meet The Press *April 6.*

Business Week Sees "Sure Disaster" If Wasteful Pentagon Spending Continues

"In recent weeks, the nation has been shocked to find the Pentagon in an all-too-familiar posture, facing charges of misjudgment and errors in weapons development and procurement. Defense Secretary Laird has described to Congress a few of the worst cases that he has found since moving into the Pentagon, including the Army's AH-56 helicopter, the Air Force's C-5A transport, and various Navy shipbuilding programs, which, taken together, have cost taxpayers almost $2-billion more than originally anticipated. In addition, the Air Force's F-111 is still in deep trouble, and the Army's M-551 (Sheridan) armored reconnaissance vehicle looks like a debacle.

"The problem of enormous defense costs, however, is not simply administrative and technical, but strategic and political. Vietnam spending is expected by the Pentagon to stay close to $30-billion annually for the next two years. And Secretary Laird himself is calling for deployment of an amended version of the Sentinel anti-ballistic missile system (now known as Safeguard) that will cost at least another $6.6 billion by the mid-1970's.

"There is no reason to suggest that those in command at the Pentagon do not have the security of the U.S. in mind. However, there is little doubt that at the root of the inability of government to check the development of many unsound weapons systems is what the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower called 'the unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, of the military-industrial complex.' Eight years ago, Eisenhower's warning of the dangers inherent in a 'disastrous rise of power' in the military and the huge defense contractors seemed somewhat alarmist. Today they ring of prophecy.

"There is no more important problem for President Nixon and the Congress than to establish adequate supervision and control of Defense Dept. programs, without hampering operations of the agency. The Pentagon as well as powerful companies will fight any attempt to curb their activities. But a method to check the proliferation of unnecessary and unsound military programs must be found. The alternative is sure disaster."

—Editorial in Business Week, *April 5.*

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nam (1967 ed. p. 319) says 2.5% of the landowners held half the cultivated land "and more than 80% of the land was cultivated by peasants owning no land at all" whom the landlords could dispossess "without cause". The peasant helped the Viet Cong because their defeat would mean the return of the landlords. This is the key to the war, and Westmoreland talks (at p. 242) of the "wealth of counter-insurgency experience" we have amassed in the war. But this, the basic lesson, he has never learned. Indeed a story probably lies buried behind his silence on this issue. Former Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman told a reporter recently (Richard Critchfield in *Washington Star,* March 16) that in 1966 the U.S. Embassy in Saigon "informed Washington it opposed land reform on the grounds it would create political instability!"

When Landlords Are Our Allies

Is that how Westmoreland feels, too? And does that explain his silence? In a sense of course land reform *would* create political instability. Our base is in a regime which represents the absentee landlords and the gentry class. To take the side of the peasant would alienate them. But the alternative is to keep U.S. troops in Vietnam for a long time, bolstering an oligarchic regime against the majority of its people. Ever since the Russian revolution, the failure of intervention and counter-revolution has been due to this same unwillingness to let the peasant have the land.

It is dangerous, especially when the Pentagon has been tooling up for "counter insurgency", i.e. interventionism elsewhere, to have an Army Chief of Staff who has failed to grasp this elementary fact. Westmoreland doesn't even understand the military realities involved in the war he commanded for four frustrating years. He keeps saying complacently that the Viet Cong cannot hope to win a military victory. That is true, but irrelevant. It doesn't need to win a military victory. All the VC needs is to keep fighting until we see that the game isn't worth the cost, which is why we are negotiating now in Paris. In this battle between an elephant and a swarm of fleas, the very immensity of our military machine is its chief weakness. This is how a fourth rate war 9,000 miles away against a poorly armed and vastly outnumbered enemy has weakened the dollar, created inflation and exacerbated all our domestic problems.

Westmoreland no more understands the politics of the war at home than he did the politics of the war in Vietnam.

Alert and Eager For New Vietnams

"Our operations in Vietnam have been conducted to block Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, but this aggression is only the most visible portion of the Communist threat to United States security interests in the Pacific. Less obvious components of the total Communist threat are manifested by the provocative actions of North Korea, the mounting pressures of the North Vietnamese presence in Laos and Cambodia, and the rising level of Communist inspired insurgency in Thailand and Burma. These situations have required careful and continuing evaluation to insure the most efficient allocations of available resources in the Pacific Command to conduct the war in Vietnam and, at the same time, the protection of vital United States interests in an area stretching from the Bering Sea in the north to the eastern Indian Ocean in the South."

—Adm. Sharp's preface to his Report on the War.

In his first posture statement as Army Chief of Staff to the Senate Armed Services Committee March 25 he said "There are disturbing indications that deliberate efforts are being made to introduce the divisiveness found in our society into the Army." "Divisiveness" is what a free society is all about. If we are divided about Vietnam it is because the country is waking up to the lack of candor and the lack of competence in the way he and the military have been running the war. The draftees reflect this same disillusion and dismay, and the same fear that our military are endangering the American economy and the stability of our society.

Even in his final report on the war Westmoreland is still relying on the body count as his primary index of military progress. He wages war by computer. "Since Jan. 1, 1961," he reported to the Senate Armed Services Committee, "the NVA and VC have lost almost four times as many men killed in battle as have the South Vietnamese and Free World forces." This ratio, he added, "includes the figures for 1968, when the enemy lost 5.67 men killed for each allied soldier killed." The precision verges on caricature. Body count statistics have long been a bitter joke among the troops but Westmoreland takes them as seriously as a baseball box-score. Asia is no place for body-count warfare. Even with a 4-to-1 ratio in our favor, we could easily run out of American bodies long before we had made a dent in the teeming millions of Asia.

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